

**Amendments to the Specification:**

Please amend the paragraph of lines 6-16 on page 9 to make the indicated change in line 13.

A further advantage of the method described consists in the fact that the acid treatment also allows a partial exchange of the zeolite into acid form, in a single passage. In this phase, a zeolite can, in fact, be obtained in partially acid form, leaving a contact time which is sufficient to effect the ionic exchange between the  $H^+$  ion and alkaline or ~~earth-alkaline~~ alkaline earth metal present in the zeolite. The entity of the exchange depends on the accessibility of the cationic exchange sites; for example for zeolites with large pores, it is at least 30%.

Please amend the last paragraph on page 11.

Thanks to the exchange contribution of phase (a), steps (e) and (f) must be effected only once to guarantee residual alkaline or ~~earth-alkaline~~ alkaline earth metal values lower than 150 ppm.